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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

A week ago, it was "hell froze over". This week, I swore that I saw pigs fly! The Red Sox took it all this past week. No more "Wait 'til next year"! That year is now! Last week, I said that the World Series would seem almost anti-climactic. And, I was right. It seemed too easy, too predictable. Not that I had really expected the Series to be a 4-game sweep, because I didn't. But this was a very satisfying victory for generations of Red Sox fans. Next year, it's gonna be the Cubs!

I'd write more this week, but it's been an exhausting past couple of weeks watching these games. Another couple of days of watching the highlights of the past season, and then I can finally get some rest. And enjoy the thrills for awhile longer!

Until next time...

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Steem Engine 3.2

Hello,

Steem v3.2 has finally been released. There are quite a few bug fixes plus great new features:

Emulation Bugs

Rewrote DMA sound again (Badger Demo and lots of other STE programs).
Fixed some CPU bugs (Wrath of the Demon, Zoolook).
Fixed read-only disk image read sector bug (thanks Jorge).
Fixed big frame bug (War Heli, thanks Jorge again).
Fixed byte palette bug (lots of mono programs).
Fixed current time seconds bug.
Fixed FDC bug (Chaos Strikes Back Replicants crack).
Fixed FDC IO access bug (White Spirit Demo).
Allowed programs to set the time/date (Sewer doc displayer).

Lots and lots of other stuff (cheers Jorge).

Other Bugs

Made Steem work again on Windows 95.
Fixed multiple save over last snapshot undo bug.
XSteem: Improved non-English keyboard mappings.

New Features

Pasti copy-protected disk image library support (Pasti library will be released soon).
Disk image database: easy detection of the contents of disk images (thanks to Keili for all his work).
Vastly improved VSync.
Undo last reset and undo last load snapshot options.
XSteem: More features in disk manager.
XSteem: Web links have returned (and they work now).
XSteem: Added RtAudio library sound.
Debug: Lots of stuff.

The new version is available from the download page:
http://steem.atari.st/download.htm

Also make sure you download the disk image database to enable some of the new features:
http://steem.atari.st/database.htm

Steem website:
http://steem.atari.st

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Best regards,
 Paul CAILLET
 http://music-atari.org

Eiffel Atari PS/2 Interface Updated

Hi,

I have updated the Eiffel firmware 1.0.9 and the hardware (backwards compatibility), there are some changes and a new cool feature...
An LCD display 2x16 for see clock, temperature, an user message of 8 characters.

Now there are a full Hypertext documentation, and the schema.
There are also an example in C for send the LCD message to Eiffel.
Eiffel works without keyboard driver since v 1.0.7.

Regards,

Didier.

--
Didier MEQUIGNON Aniplayer download: http://aniplay.atari.org

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, it’s finally here... it’s election time. If you’re reading this after Tuesday night, you probably already know the results of the election. And depending on which side of the aisle you find yourself on (or which side of the ocean, even) you may be either relieved or disheartened.

But that’s really okay. You see, this system, this experiment, is self-correcting. If something is off-kilter this time, we’ll have another chance to correct the situation the next time around. True, it’s not the optimum solution, but it’s another one of the checks and balances.

I almost passed over the talk about the election this week, but I got a couple of emails over the past couple of weeks... some agreeing with including my opinions on the elections, some disagreeing. And I figure that anything that generates any interest should be addressed.

I did, however, decide not to voice my preference in the election. I guess that I’m just not really impressed by my own opinions.

And what of my friends outside the country? Well, more than half the email I’ve gotten have been from people outside the U.S.

Some of them expressed displeasure at the mention of politics within the virtual pages of this magazine, but most of them either stated their opinions quite well, and without the nastiness that we’ve come to expect when dealing with politics.

And that, more than anything else, reminds me that I’m dealing with "Atari Folk". They’re people, like you and I, who’ve come to understand (or at least believe) that having options is important. And anything that keeps our options open... let alone protecting and preserving them... must be a good thing.

This makes me think back to my college days when I was befriended by a visiting professor. He was from Poland, and had had a long and distinguished career. Since his specialty was sociology (or ’ethnography’, as he called it), I would read sociology texts into a tape recorder for him so that he could more easily understand them.

One evening we met for dinner in the campus cafeteria and he had a look of urgency about him. After a few minutes, he couldn’t hold it in any longer, and he asked me if I have ever seen a program called The McNeil Lehrer Report.

I was familiar with the premier Public Broadcasting System news show, and told him so. He was amazed that people were allowed to speak freely... not only in public, but having it broadcast across the country.

Being from Poland, and being from his time (he was active in 'the underground' during the second world war, and had lived in a communist country for more than 30 years after that), he couldn't come to terms with being able to speak freely without fear of retribution.

But that wasn't the big part of what seemed to shake him. What he found troubling was that we seemed to take it all for granted; That we didn't even consider what a gift this was.

I tried seeing things through his eyes for a few moments and I realized that I just wasn't equipped for it. I too was a product of my surroundings. But I never forgot the look on his face, or his amazement with our broadcasts or our taking them for granted.

Since then, I've always tried to NOT take things for granted. Sometimes, I even succeed.

Well, enough of that. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

'Sam F' asks for help with his CT60:

"Let me start by saying that once in awhile, my Falcon will actually boot, and then allow rebooting a few times. However, much more often than not, I just get a white, blank, screen.

Okay, my problem. I start my Falcon, the Falcon and CT60 both get power, but my fdd does not get checked (no light), and the hdd does not spin up. All I get on the monitor is a white, blank, screen.
Even if I re-boot, completely power down then power up the Falcon/CT60...nada, zip, nothing, but a white, blank, screen.

As I noted earlier, once in a awhile, everything works. Falcon/CT60 boot, the on-screen display of the CT60 info, memory count, hdd check....oh!!! What a beautiful sight!!!! Then, if I am lucky, I can reboot and see all that again!!!!! But more often then not, I'll reboot and get a white, blank,screen.

And what's really frustrating, I can't even get the hdd prepped because I can't reboot!! All I get is a white, blank, screen.

I know I could send it to Rodolphe and more than likely he will be able to fix it but, given the cost of the shipping alone (I live in the U.S.A.), not to mention the distance of the round trip for Falcon mb/CT60, I have decided to leave that as the ultimate last resort.

So, I hope between all of you, you will recognize what is causing the problem, and know what the fix is.

Thanks to each and every one of you!!!"

'Coda' tells Sam:

"I'm assuming that the HDD is a 3.5" drive, which you have powered from the ATX supply. 2 things.

1. What type of IDE cable are you using (40/80pin), and how long is it? Do you have another you can try? (Try cutting a spare one in half so you have a short length with a connector at each end).

2. Can you get a multimeter, and test the 12v off the ATX supply?

I think that the garbage you are seeing with HDDriver is when it doesn't detect the IDE drive properly and you get loads of weird "~~~~~~~~~~~" when it should say "IDE0: IBM-20040 HUGE MOTHER" or whatever. The IDE in the falcon is flaky to say the least (its not buffered at all) so although some people can use 2' IDE cables most of us have to use short ones (mine didn't work with a standard cable, I had to cut it down).

As for your white screen problem, like I said check the 12v, and also have a look at the solder jumpers on the motherboard. They tell the system what speed ROMS are fitted. They need to be a particular way for the CT60."

Mark Duckworth tells Coda and Sam:

"Neither of these are the problems. I used several ATX PSU's to try to get the problem to go away. I also used my working configuration of IDE cabling/adapters/drives on his falcon and it didn't help. I REALLY tried to troubleshoot this. It does it in 060 mode and 030 mode.

Sam adds:

"Just another thing to let you folks know, the orange floppy busy light is constantly on when I get the white, blank, screen thingy...

Well, I tried the Falcon a couple 2 or 3 times this weekend....absolutely nothing but but....white, blank. screen, no apparent drive activity, and the orange fdd light on the keyboard stays on.

I think I'm starting to get depressed."

Mark asks Sam:

"Doesn't it work after you hit reset a couple times? I didn't have a problem getting it booted up. But you know this is a blessing in disguise. If it breaks reliably it'll be easier to fix."

Mike Freeman adds:

"Just a thought... Have you checked your ST-RAM memory? I once purchased a 14Mb memory card to upgrade from 4Mb. It was this ugly-looking reddish-pink colored, really long card. I put it in, turned on my Falcon, and got the exact same symptoms as yours. It turned out, one of the solders on the under-side of the card were touching the metal top of a capacitor. Not a good situation. The only way to keep it from happening was to use a piece of non-conductive material (plastic) to cover the capacitor. Bad memory card design, I think. Anyway, if something is happening with your memory, that could possibly be a problem. Maybe?"

Thomas Brown adds his experiences:

"Well the only thing I have seen that is similar to that is my TT, sometimes the memory expansion works its way loose and I get the white screen.. once I press it back it boots ok so maybe something isn't seated all the way and it shorts..gonna fix that soon tho (got me a hot glue gun) I wish you luck on the Falcon."

Derek Mark Edding asks about an internal hard drive for his Falcon:

"I have a leftover 20 GB hard disk from a laptop computer upgrade. It's an IDE Fujitsu MHM2200AT.

The pinout looks identical to the 2.5" IDE drive inside the Falcon, although this drive is about half as thick.

If it's possible to use this drive, is there any software available that would be able to format and partition this drive for the Falcon?

I have the ICD Pro utilities with HDFMT.PRG version 6.23. I suspect that it is too outdated to work on a hard disk of this size. I see that ICDFMT.DAT lists drive parameters, so I wonder if there are more updated parameters available... Or if it would be worth trying to add them for this drive?"

Mark Bedingfield tells Derek:

"Yes. HDDriver will do the job. Definitely worth it.

http://www.seimet.de/hddriver_english.html "

Barrie at Keychange adds:

"It probably will work but, from experience, you may find the mounting holes don't fit the bracket and the shield will need cutting to clear the cable end."

Coda asks Barrie:

"Why wouldn't it fit? Its a 2.5" IDE drive..."

Mark Bedingfield explains:

"The slimline 2.5 inch drive's have there mounting holes in a different location. 5 minutes with a drill on the Hard drive cradle fixes the problem."

Greg Goodwin adds his opinion:

"Try the ICD tools. They might well work. Note that TOS 4.04 has a 1 GB partition limit, so you will not be able to use all 20 GB without supplementing your OS."

Well folks, that’s it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - PlayStation Portable Price Set!
GTA: San Andreas Hits the Streets!
Batman Begins!
And more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Sony Announces PlayStation Portable Price

Sony Corp. announced a price more fitting of a video-game machine than a slick movie-playing gadget for its new PlayStation Portable - 19,800 yen ($186).

Ken Kutaragi, Executive Deputy President in charge of Sony’s game business, said he thinks consumers will be pleasantly surprised by the price for the device, which he said may be worth twice as much.

But he acknowledged the Japanese electronics and entertainment giant doesn’t expect to turn a profit on the machine until the fiscal year that starts April 1, 2005.

The PlayStation Portable, or PSP, goes on sale in Japan on Dec. 12. Dates and prices for the United States and Europe are still undecided, although overseas sales are being planned for the first quarter of next year.

The PSP is Sony’s entry into handheld game machines - an area now dominated by the Game Boy series from Japanese rival Nintendo Co., which makes Super Mario and Pokemon games.

The PSP, which uses a new disk format, is being billed not only as a game machine but also as a mobile gadget for watching movies and listening to music files. But such uses will have to wait.

The standard for films was still under discussion with several movie studios, and a movie lineup and download services won’t be announced for several months, Kutaragi said.

Sony plans to sell 200,000 PSP machines in the initial shipment, 500,000 by the end of this year, and 1 million by March 31, 2005, in Japan, Kutaragi said.

Analysts have said the price will be key in determining how well the machine does against Game Boy.

They had expected a price of about 30,000 yen ($280) because of the machine's sophisticated functions.

Nintendo, based in Kyoto, has already announced that the Nintendo DS, a revamped Game Boy Advance with two screens, will go on sale for $150 in the United States Nov. 21 and 15,000 yen ($140) in Japan on Dec. 2.

Kazuya Yamamoto, analyst at UFJ Tsubasa Securities Co. in Tokyo, said PSP's fate depends heavily on the movies and music that will become available.

"Sony put up a good fight by setting a price that's cheaper than expected," Yamamoto said. "But everything still depends on how widespread it can become as a game machine."

'Grand Theft Auto' Seen Breaking Games Sales Record

When the violent video game "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" hits stores on Tuesday, its sales could eclipse Hollywood's most successful films, even as it draws the ire of critics.

Developed by Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. imprint Rockstar Games, "San Andreas" should sell more than 4.5 million units globally in its first week, which could make it one of the top sellers of all time, analysts say.

"This will be one of the few video games to sell more copies than the preceding version," said American Technology Research analyst P.J. McNealy, noting that the game's predecessor "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" sold 12 million copies. "The expectations are 13-15 million for this one," he added.

At about $50 each, first-week sales of 4.5 million units would equal about $225 million. Should it reach 15 million units, sales of "San Andreas" would beat U.S. and Canada box office sales of the film "Titanic" by more than $100 million.

Its debut kicks off a season of blockbusters in the global interactive game publishing market, which at over $30 billion a year, dwarfs the movie business.

"San Andreas," exclusive to Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2 console, will be followed on Nov. 9 by "Halo 2," made by Microsoft Corp. for its Xbox. Nintendo Co. Ltd., maker of the GameCube, will have "Metroid Prime 2."

Microsoft said more than 1.5 million copies of "Halo 2" have already been pre-ordered.

"Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas's" plot revolves around a gangster returning to a city modeled after Los Angeles, to find his mother has been murdered and the police have blamed him for another killing. What follows is up to 150 hours of story-driven "gameplay" in which users can steal vehicles,

maneuver out-of-control car chases, and shoot opponents.

"It is very violent (and includes) shooting cops," said Wedbush Morgan Securities analyst Michael Pachter. "People like being the bad guy. This is a way of acting out a stupid fantasy."

Pachter adds that Microsoft's "Halo 2" is "every bit as violent, but the things that you are shooting don't look like people. They look like space suit guys."

Analysts expect "San Andreas" to stir up similar criticism to "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City," released in 2002, which was condemned by family values watchdog groups and Connecticut's U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman, an advocate of restrictions on violent games.

"Vice City" sales soared as game enthusiasts shrugged off the protests.

Like "Vice City," "San Andreas" carries an "M," or Mature, rating. According to the Entertainment Software Rating Board, M-rated games feature intense violence, contain sexual themes and strong language, and is suitable for persons over 17.

This time, the game will again benefit specialty stores Electronics Boutique Holdings Corp., and GameStop Corp., as well as larger retail chains such as Wal-Mart Stores Inc., which monitors the content of the products it sells.

"If you are Wal-Mart you aren't going to miss out on selling one of the biggest titles of the year," said analyst American Technology's McNealy.

A spokesman for Wal-Mart was not available for comment.

Fueled by anticipation for "San Andreas," Take-Two shares have been strong this year. But they slipped 97 cents, or about 3 percent, to $31.58 on Monday after Banc of America Securities cut its rating to "neutral" from "buy," citing a lack of other hit titles in its pipeline.

"Beyond GTA, there remain no other blockbuster releases in Take-Two's lineup," said analyst Gary Cooper in a note to clients. "We have only moderate expectations for Rockstar's releases after San Andreas (such as "Midnight Club 3" and "The Warriors")."

Batman Begins Coming in 2005

Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, DC Comics and Electronic Arts announced that the companies have joined forces to bring Batman Begins to multiple videogame platforms in 2005. In this exclusive co-publishing agreement, a game based on the upcoming Warner Bros. Pictures' film starring Christian Bale will be released day and date with the film on the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system, the PSP (PlayStation Portable) handheld videogame system, the Xbox video game system from Microsoft, the Nintendo GameCube and Game Boy Advance.

"The theatrical release of Batman Begins will be the entertainment event of the summer. Leveraging our extensive experience with blockbuster franchises, we look forward to bringing this game to market," said Greg Richardson, Vice President and General Manager, EA Partners. "The Batman

fiction is rich with style, drama and action - three elements that define this game and will help plunge players into the heart of the experience."

"Batman Begins is the darker depiction of Batman that we've all been waiting for, and we are teaming with EA to bring players an edgy, action game that captures this tale," said Jason Hall, Senior Vice President of Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. "Co-publishing Batman Begins allows Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment to continue its involvement in the development and marketing of quality games based on Warner Bros. properties."

"We're thrilled to partner with EA and Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment to capture the magic of BATMAN BEGINS in a ground-breaking videogame," said Paul Levitz, President and Publisher of DC Comics. "This will mark the first time that a Batman video game has been developed to complement a film event, and we look forward to inviting players to step into the movie's reality and make the world of Batman their own."

Together, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment and EA are overseeing all development and production aspects of the game, while EA alone will handle distribution. The companies will lead joint marketing campaigns. The game is being developed by UK-based Eurocom for the consoles, and by Vicarious Visions for the handhelds.

The Batman Begins film explores the origins of the Batman legend and the Dark Knight's emergence as a force for good in Gotham. In the wake of his parents' murder, disillusioned industrial heir Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale) travels the world seeking the means to fight injustice and turn fear against those who prey on the fearful. He returns to Gotham and unveils his alter-ego: Batman, a masked crusader who uses his strength, intellect and an array of high tech deceptions to fight the sinister forces that threaten the city.

Ace Combat 5 Ships For Playstation 2

Leading video games developer and publisher Namco Hometek Inc. announced today the next installment in its premier aerial combat franchise, Ace Combat 5 The Unsung War, has shipped to North American retail outlets. Developed by Namco Ltd. in Japan, Ace Combat 5 is available exclusively for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system.

"Prepare to take flight Ace Combat 5 is finally here," said Garry Cole, executive vice president at Namco Hometek Inc. "With a diverse offering of missions and fast-paced action spread across spectacular landscapes, Ace Combat 5 is destined to fly into the hearts of newcomers and long-time franchise fans this fall."

Ace Combat 5 engages players in detailed dog fighting missions and intense squadron command to deliver the most invigorating experience to date in the renowned ACE COMBAT franchise of games. Players will find themselves entrenched in an unforgettable aerial experience as they aim to complete more than 30 missions ranging from air-to-air combat, air-to-ground fighting, air-to-sea assaults, rescue, recon and more. Impressive graphics created with satellite imagery and 3D models heighten the action in Ace Combat 5, as players travel over breathtaking environments inspired by recognizable real-world landscapes in more than 50 authentic licensed planes.

With its inclusion of Wingman Command, players of Ace Combat 5 can issue mid-mission directives to three wingmen and carry out coordinated group attacks. Players can also experience the game?s addictive Arcade Mode, which puts reflexes to the test through fast-paced missions measuring speed and accuracy. In addition, in-game radio communications lend depth, strategy and realism to the game’s dynamic battle sequences.

For more information about Ace Combat 5, please visit http://acecombat5.namco.com.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Security for Internet Users Deemed Weak

Internet users at home are not nearly as safe online as they believe, according to a nationwide inspection by researchers. They found most consumers have no firewall protection, outdated antivirus software and dozens of spyware programs secretly running on their computers.

One beleaguered home user in the government-backed study had more than 1,000 spyware programs running on his sluggish computer when researchers examined it.

Bill Mines, a personal trainer in South Riding, Va., did not fare much better. His family’s 3-year-old Dell computer was found infected with viruses and more than 600 pieces of spyware surreptitiously monitoring his online activities.

"I was blown away," Mines said. "I had a lot of viruses and other things I didn’t know about. I had no idea things like this could happen."

The Internet always has had its share of risky neighborhoods and dark alleys. But with increasingly sophisticated threats from hackers, viruses, spam e-mails and spyware, trouble is finding computer users no matter how cautiously they roam online.

The technology industry is feeling the pain, too.

Spurred by the high costs of support calls from irritated customers - and fearful that frustrated consumers will stop buying new products - Internet providers, software companies and computer-makers are making efforts to increase awareness of threats and provide customers with new tools to protect themselves.

Still, many computer users appear remarkably unprepared for the dangers they face.

The study being released Monday by America Online and the National Cyber

Security Alliance found that 77 percent of 326 adults in 12 states assured researchers in a telephone poll they were safe from online threats. Nearly as many people felt confident they were already protected specifically from viruses and hackers.

When experts visited those same homes to examine computers, they found two-thirds of adults using antivirus software that was not updated in at least seven days.

Two-thirds of the computer users also were not using any type of protective firewall program, and spyware was found on the computers of 80 percent of those in the study.

The survey participants all were AOL subscribers selected in 22 cities and towns by an independent market analysis organization.

The alliance, a nonprofit group, is backed by the Homeland Security Department and the Federal Trade Commission, plus leading technology companies, including Cisco Systems, Microsoft, eBay and Dell.

The group’s chief, Ken Watson, said consumers suffer from complacency and a lack of expert advice on keeping their computers secure. "Just like you don’t expect to get hit by a car, you don’t believe a computer attack can happen to you," Watson said.

"There really is quite a perception gap," agreed Daniel W. Caprio, the Commerce Department’s deputy assistant secretary for technology policy. "Clearly there is confusion. We need to do a better job making information and practical tips for home users and small businesses available."

Wendy Avino, an interior decorator in Lansdowne, Va., said researchers found 14 spyware programs on her borrowed laptop and noticed that her $50 antivirus software was not properly configured to scan her computer at least monthly for possible infections.

"We don’t go in funny chat rooms, I don’t open funny mail," Avino said. "If it says ’hot girls,’ I delete it. We do everything in the right way, so how does stuff get in there?"

She complained she was misled believing her commercial antivirus and firewall programs would protect her from all varieties of online threats; most do not detect common types of spyware.

"It is very complicated for the average home user," said Ari Schwartz, an expert on Internet threats for the Center for Democracy and Technology, a Washington civil liberties group.

"There’s a lack of accountability all around, from consumers who don’t believe they should have to do this to companies who blame the consumer. It’s finger-pointing back and forth," Schwartz said.

Microsoft’s chairman, Bill Gates, said the company spent nearly $1 billion on its recent upgrade to improve security for customers using the latest version of its Windows software.

AOL purchased full-page advertisements in major newspapers this month pledging better security for its subscribers. Dell has begun a campaign to educate customers how to detect and remove spyware themselves.

The government is increasingly involved, too.

The FTC this month filed its first federal court case over spyware. The House overwhelmingly approved two bills to increase criminal penalties and fines over spyware. The Homeland Security Department offers free e-mail tips for home Internet users to keep themselves secure.

Microsoft Revises Anti-Spam Standard

Microsoft Corp. on Monday said it had revised its proposal to weed out "spam" e-mail to win over skeptical Internet engineers who have been reluctant to adopt technology owned by the dominant software company.

Microsoft officials said they have revised their SenderID protocol to work better with an existing standard and have narrowed their patent application to make sure it does not cover other proposals.

The changes have won over at least one important player. America Online Inc., a division of Time Warner Inc., said it would now begin testing the protocol again after abandoning it one month ago.

Spammers often appropriate the e-mail addresses of others to slip through content filters, a tactic known as "spoofing."

Microsoft's Sender ID is one of several proposals that would allow America Online and other Internet providers to check that a message from joe@example.com actually comes from example.com's server computers. Messages that do not match up could be safely rejected as spam.

The technology would be invisible to everyday users.

Microsoft in May combined its Sender ID proposal with another developed by entrepreneur Meng Wong and submitted them to the standards-setting Internet Engineering Task Force for approval.

But several key players said they would not use the standard because Microsoft holds patents on the underlying technology, even though Microsoft has said it will not charge for its use.

Ryan Hamlin, general manager of Microsoft's anti-spam group, said the patent was necessary to protect the company from frivolous lawsuits.

SenderID and Wong's Sender Policy Framework proposal work in slightly different ways. SPF checks the "bounce" address provided to return undeliverable mail, while SenderID looks at another address buried deeper within technical routing records.

Microsoft's approach is designed to help catch fraudulent "phishing" messages that disguise themselves as banks or other legitimate businesses in a bid to collect bank-account numbers and other sensitive information, Hamlin said.

"Now you have a framework that will encompass both of those checks together," said Carl Hutzler, AOL's director of anti- spam operations.

Microsoft said it had resubmitted SenderID to the IETF for approval.

AOL Reconsiders, Backs Sender ID

America Online is giving Microsoft a second chance by agreeing to support the software giant’s anti-spam technology that it previously had rejected.

AOL decided to reconsider using Sender ID after Microsoft went back to the drawing board and submitted a new version of the e-mail authentication application to the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

Company spokesperson Nicholas Graham told NewsFactor that AOL collaborated with Microsoft on the new specification, stressing the need for compatibility with a large group of Internet domains.

"The bottom line is that we have to get moving on the testing phase for all e-mail authentication technologies," Graham said. "This is a long-term process, and we have to get it right because spoofing, phishing and other spam attacks are a serious problem that is getting worse."

Last month AOL dropped its support of Sender ID, citing "serious, technical concerns" that the technology is not backward-compatible with the alternative Sender Policy Framework (SPF) specification AOL and others use to fight phishing attacks and other spam e-mail. The alleged incompatibility is a result of recent changes to the protocol and a substantial change from the original SenderID plan, AOL claimed.

Other concerns about the Microsoft-backed anti-spam protocol included potential patent issues and a generally lukewarm reception from the open-source community. AOL said it would offer SPF-only checking on inbound e-mail for the time being.

These issues were brought to the attention of Microsoft and others in the online industry, including members of the Messaging Anti-Abuse Working Group (MAAWG) and the IETF community. "A new Sender ID version is being submitted to the IETF that we believe fully addresses and answers AOL’s concerns," AOL says in a statement.

Sender ID represents the merger of two parallel applications: one from Microsoft, called Caller ID, and the SPF. Microsoft owns two parts of Sender ID, called "the core" and Purported Responsible Address (PRA), and recently filed a patent application to cover part of the technology.

Microsoft revised the spec to ensure compatibility with all SPF records and now accepts some 60,000 or so domains, enabling customers to choose between the "from" address verification or a PRA.

The new Sender ID spec enables AOL and others testing SPF to offer their input in the approval process, and it means that the 100,000 domains publishing SPF records do not have to change their DNS listings, AOL states.

Meanwhile, AOL plans to pursue alternate technologies to improve sender identification in e-mail, including Yahoo’s Domain Keys and Cisco Systems’ Identified Internet Mail applications.

’Spam King’ Ordered to Disable Spyware

A federal judge has ordered a man known as the "Spam King" to disable so-called spyware programs that infiltrate people's computers, track their Internet use and flood them with pop-up advertising.

U.S. District Judge Joseph DiClerico issued a temporary restraining order Thursday against Stanford Wallace and his companies, SmartBot.net Inc. of Richboro, Pa., and Seismic Entertainment Productions Inc. of Rochester. SmartBot's principal place of business is Barrington.

Prosecutors sought the injunction on behalf of the Federal Trade Commission, which targeted Wallace in its first anti-spyware action.

The judge ordered Wallace to remove software code that exploits security holes in computer operating systems and Web browsers, then tracks people's Internet use to bombard them with pop-up ads.

Wallace also is accused of trying to sell computer users $30 remedies called "Spy Wiper" and "Spy Deleter" that the FTC says don't work.

"Spyware" describes a broad category of software that can be installed through unsafe e-mails or Web pages. It sometimes is bundled with other software that consumers download and install, such as file-sharing programs that can be used to download music and movies illegally.

Spyware programs quietly monitor which Web sites a consumer visits, and some may even redirect users to different sites. They can make computers sluggish or cause them to crash.

"We see it as good relief for consumers," FTC attorney Laura Sullivan said of DiClerico's order. She could not say how pervasive Wallace's spyware was.

Wallace's lawyer, Ralph Jacobs of Philadelphia, said Wallace wants "to use the Internet for advertising in lawful and proper ways."

"There are a wide range of advertising practices on the Internet that use some of the techniques the FTC objects to, and the defendant looks forward to an opportunity to establish exactly what advertising practices are allowable," Jacobs said.

Wallace formerly headed a company called Cyber Promotions in the 1990s that sent as many as 30 million junk e-mails daily to consumers, earning him the nicknames "Spamford" and "Spam King." He left the company after lawsuits by America Online and CompuServe.

The judge scheduled a hearing for Nov. 9.

Defendants Accused of Sending Spam

Three people who allegedly sent America Online customers millions of junk e-mail messages touting penny stocks and other Internet gimmicks went on trial Tuesday in the nation's first such felony case.

The defendants are being tried under a 2003 Virginia anti-spam law that prosecutors say is the harshest of its kind in the nation.

The three face up to 15 years in prison if convicted on all three counts.

Assistant Attorney General Russell McGuire told jurors that on one day alone in July 2003, defendant Jeremy Jaynes sent or attempted to send 7.7 million e-mail messages to AOL customers using false identities or bogus company names. The goal of the messages was to sell software that would allow a person to work from home as a "FedEx refund processor" or that would help them pick the right penny stocks.

He said the suspects used false identities to evade AOL's spam filters.

"When you masquerade your identity, that's when you have a problem," McGuire said.

Defense lawyers countered that sending spam is not illegal under Virginia law unless prosecutors can prove that the defendants intentionally masked its origin and can prove that the junk e-mail was unsolicited. They said prosecutors will be unable to meet that burden.

"Marketing via the Internet is not a crime," said Thomas Mulrine, attorney for defendant Jessica DeGroot. "It may be annoying to you, but it's not a crime to market on the Internet."

Jaynes and DeGroot, who are siblings, and the third defendant, Richard Rutkowski, are all from the Raleigh, N.C., area, but are on trial in Virginia because they allegedly sent their spam to customers of AOL, which has its servers at its Virginia headquarters.

While other states have passed spam laws in recent years, Virginia authorities say theirs goes further than others because it gives prosecutors the power to seize assets from those sending bulk e-mail while imposing up to five years in prison.

E-Mail Scam Dupes Linux Users

Red Hat Inc. on Saturday warned users of an e-mail scam designed to plant malicious code on users' systems. The malicious e-mail poses as a security update from the vendor, a technique that has become familiar to Windows users, but is a novelty in the Linux world.

The e-mail, which has been circulating since late last week, says it originates from the "Red Hat Security Team" and urges users to download a patch fixing vulnerabilities in the ls and mkdir file system utilities. To add a veneer of authenticity, the scammers used an authentic-seeming domain name, fedora-redhat.com, to host the malicious download.

"The Red Hat Security Team strongly advises you to immediately apply the fileutils-1.0.6 patch. This is a critical-critical update," the message says. The e-mail message and the site contained instructions for downloading, decompressing and installing the false update.

The fedora-redhat.com domain name was reported to have been displaying the fake security message as late as Sunday, but by Monday morning it was no longer available. Fedora is Red Hat's Linux distribution for technology enthusiasts and hobbyists; the company maintains an authentic Fedora site at fedora.redhat.com.

Red Hat became aware of the scam on Saturday, and issued an advisory on the

front page of its security site. "These trojan updates contain malicious code designed to compromise the systems they are run on," said Red Hat Security Response Team leader Mark Cox on Monday, in a statement provided to eWEEK.com.

Cox said the company never sends unsolicited security messages and noted that all genuine messages and packages are signed with a GPG (Gnu Privacy Guard) digital signature, the details of which are available on Red Hat's site http ///www.redhat.com/security/team/key.html.

Windows has been hit by several worms that spread via e-mails masquerading as security patches; for example, a version of the Dumaru worm last year spread via fake Microsoft e-mails. A related problem is the proliferation of phishing e-mails, which lure users (on any platform) to a supposedly authentic Web site, where they are induced to enter sensitive information such as bank account details and passwords to e-commerce accounts.

Microsoft, Others File More Anti-Spam Lawsuits

Microsoft Corp. and other Internet access providers filed three new lawsuits on Thursday to stop the spread of unsolicited e-mail messages touting everything from home refinancing to miracle health cures.

At the same time, America Online, a unit of Time Warner Inc., filed a lawsuit in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, targeting "spim," or unsolicited messages sent to users of its instant messaging service.

Microsoft, the world's largest software maker, and AOL, EarthLink Inc. and Yahoo Inc. filed the lawsuits "against those who strain our consumers' inboxes with unwanted and deceptive e-mail, many carrying and transmitting malicious code, spyware and links to phishing sites."

"Phishing" is the practice of sending bogus e-mails that try to trick people into revealing private financial information for purposes of identity theft.

Microsoft filed its lawsuits in federal courts, while the other companies brought separate lawsuits in other state and federal courts.

Microsoft has used its legal muscle to launch a barrage of lawsuits against spammers over the past year in an attempt to curb the spread of unsolicited e-mail. The company, based in Redmond, Washington, is involved in more than 100 legal cases against spammers.

Microsoft's lawsuits said Steven Blaier and his business Herbal Technologies, as well as other as yet unidentified spammers illegally sent untraceable e-mails claiming to be from AOL, Yahoo or EarthLink, in violation of the CAN-SPAM federal law.

Steven Blaier was not immediately available for comment, and calls to Herbal Technologies went unanswered.

AOL's lawsuit is the first of its kind targeting messages transmitted, often anonymously, to users of instant text-swapping messages and chat rooms.

"We will put up every roadblock that we can to stop this," said AOL

spokesman Nicholas Graham.

The four companies joined hands last year in an alliance to fight the spread of spam.

AOL Files Lawsuit Against IM 'Spim'

America Online Inc. said Thursday it had filed a federal lawsuit accusing numerous unnamed defendants of violating federal and state laws by sending bulk messages known as "spim" to instant message accounts and Internet chat rooms.

The lawsuit, filed late Wednesday in federal court in Alexandria, Va., marked the first time AOL has expressly targeted spim in a legal action.

AOL and its Anti-Spam Alliance partners - EarthLink Inc., Microsoft Corp. and Yahoo Inc. - also said Thursday that they had filed another series of lawsuits targeting spam, the bulk e-mail messages that can clog e-mail inboxes and annoy some users. The lawsuits were filed in courts in Georgia, Virginia, Washington and California.

The lawsuits accuse defendants of violating laws including the federal CAN-SPAM Act. The law prohibits senders of spam from disguising their identity by using a false return address or misleading subject line, and it bars senders from collecting addresses from Web sites.

AOL to Give Away Anti-Virus Software to Members

America Online plans to offer its 23.4 million U.S. subscribers a premium anti-virus software service, McAfee VirusScan Online, for free in November.

The online unit of Time Warner Inc. had previously charged about 2 million of its dial-up and high speed Internet subscribers an additional $2.95 a month to be able to scan incoming email, downloads and a user's desktop PC files.

"We don't think virus protection is something nice to have. It's a must-have," said Danny Kricher, executive vice president of AOL.

Non-AOL members would have to pay $40 a year for McAfee's subscription package.

The software will be available when subscribers download a new version of AOL's client software, AOL 9.0 Security Edition, in November.

Mac Users Face Malware Threat

Security experts are warning users about a malicious script for Apple's Mac OS X. The worm can harvest passwords, destroy data and install remote control software and backdoors onto a user's computer.

Dubbed ’Opener’ by Mac user Web sites, the worm is a Unix shell script that tries to turn off OS X’s firewall, and then downloads and installs various remote-control and password-cracking applications.

Further information about the malware, which antivirus companies Sophos and Symantec are calling ’Renepo,’ can be viewed at Sophos’ Web site.

"The worm can turn off the Mac OS X firewall and other security software; will download and install hacker tools for password-sniffing and cracking; will make key system directories world-writeable; and will create an admin-level user for later system abuse," Sophos says in a statement. "Renepo also turns off accounting and logging to help hide its presence."

"You do not want the Renepo worm anywhere near your Mac OS X network," Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for Sophos, says in the statement.

"Renepo makes so many security-related changes to your systems that all bets are off once you have been compromised. Because the worm attempts to harvest user, configuration and password data for a wide range of applications, it represents a huge security headache for all administrators, creating a backdoor to leave infected computers vulnerable to further attack."

The Sophos statement says that Renepo has not been seen in the wild to date. However, Renepo can be considered a warning to Macintosh users not to be complacent about the malware threat, the antivirus company said.

"This is a shot across the bows rather than a pressing immediate danger to Mac environments," Cluley said. "The Renepo worm reminds Mac users, who may have felt smug that most viruses target the Microsoft Windows market, to be careful not to turn a blind eye to security."

Although it is malicious in intent, Renepo has no effective method of automatically propagating itself and, as a result, poses little threat at the moment, Sophos said.

The worm tries to copy itself to any drive connected to the infected computer, including local drives and drives on servers or remote computers, but relies on someone with administrator privileges running it in order to install itself to the computer’s startup software. Once it is in the startup program, it will fire up every time the computer is switched on.

"From our side, we have not received a single infection report from any of our customers," Joe Hartmann, a spokesperson for antivirus firm Trend Micro, told NewsFactor.

"We don’t expect it (Renepo) to spread very far. If it was not for the fact that it runs on the Mac platform, it would be just another piece of malicious code. We typically get 500-1,000 new pieces of malware every month. We have literally seen thousands of similar pieces of code for other OS platforms, especially Windows.

On the other hand, very few Mac users use antivirus software, since there have been so few viruses and other malware, he noted. "It will be interesting to see if more hackers and malicious code authors will focus on the Mac OS again," he said.

Like Cluley, Sophos senior security analyst Chris Kraft advises Mac users not to be complacent about security.

"I think people generally believe that Macs, particularly those running Mac OS X, will not get viruses," Kraft said. "But while Renepo is not a mass-market virus, it is quite feasible that a virus could run through the Mac community."

Sophos was the first to identify this worm, Kraft told NewsFactor.

"In this case, it came through our own proprietary methodology as opposed to the collaborative technologies that we share with other vendors," Kraft noted.

However, Symantec claims that it was the first to find the worm. Symantec has had a definition in place for this worm since October 22nd, predating Sophos' claim by three days, according to Blake Hodgetts, principal software engineer, Macintosh products, Symantec Corp.

Hodgetts also notes that Symantec has had a direct customer report of an infection by this worm.

"Apple's success in the desktop and handheld-device markets meant that the appearance of this kind of malcode was a racing certainty," Phebe Waterfield, an analyst in Yankee Group's security solutions & service unit, told NewsFactor.

"All widely used platforms are a target for virus writers and hackers; attackers know that at least a few machines in every hundred will not be secure and may contain valuable information. Highly technical folks may move to even more obscure operating system platforms, but most Mac users are faced with making antivirus and patching a regular practice, just as they are on Windows.

Apple needs to make security a part of its mission, she said. "Microsoft was in the same position a few years ago, but the strategy of ignoring security problems only worked for so long.

"An appropriate response toward security issues from day one will make sure Mac continues to be seen as a secure platform. Apple could, for example, add security response as a customer service, improve support for desktop security products, and make it easier for users to download critical security updates."

Feds Indict 19 on Online ID Theft Charges

Federal authorities have indicted 19 people in the United States and abroad on charges related to a Web site investigators claimed was one of the largest online centers for trafficking in stolen identity information and credit cards.

More than 20 others have also been charged in the probe.

The site, www.shadowcrew.com, had about 4,000 members who dealt with at least 1.7 million stolen credit card numbers and caused more than $4 million in losses, the Justice Department said Thursday.

Federal agents gained control of the site during a yearlong undercover investigation by the Secret Service and other agencies, Assistant U.S.

Attorney Scott S. Christie said.

"It allowed the agents to more closely monitor the criminal conduct that was going on, and also to arrange for undercover purchases of illegal merchandise from various targets," Christie said.

Authorities believe they have charged and arrested much of the leadership, including Andrew Mantovani of Scottsdale, Ariz.; David Appleyard of Linwood, N.J.; and Anatoly Tyukanov, of Moscow, he said.

The Shadowcrew site on Thursday declared it is "For those who wish to play in the shadows!"

By early evening, however, that slogan had a line drawn through it, and the page bore a picture of a man behind bars and announced, "Activities by Shadowcrew members are being investigated by the United States Secret Service. Several arrests have recently been made ... with many more to follow."

The 62-count indictment, handed up by a federal grand jury in Newark, said the site was dedicated to aiding computer hackers and also distributed stolen bank account numbers and bogus documents such as driver’s licenses.

The investigation has led to the arrest of 21 people in the United States and about 20 in Argentina, Bulgaria, Canada, Estonia, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, Christie said. Some have not yet been indicted.

Names of lawyers for the suspects were not immediately available.

The indictment includes charges of conspiracy, trafficking in stolen credit card numbers and unlawful transfer of identification documents, among others. The penalties range from three years to 15 years in prison.

PayPal Says ’Sorry’ by Waiving Fees for a Day

PayPal wants to repay its users for dealing with its recent spate of sporadic outages by giving back a day’s worth of fees.

The online payment service, owned by eBay Inc., announced Wednesday that it will credit its premier and business account members for all transaction fees they pay this Thursday. The payback will cover transactions posted between midnight and 11:59 p.m. PDT.

In a note to customers, PayPal said the offer serves as an apology for the recent site problems and as a thank-you to customers for their business.

Earlier this month, PayPal battled on-and-off service outages for about five days following a site upgrade. The company blamed glitches in the software update.

Users at the time said they lost sales because of the interruptions. Some online merchants and sellers on eBay, which uses PayPal, were unable to complete their sales.

PayPal, which has about 50 million user accounts, said it would automatically credit accounts for the transition fees by Nov. 25. The offer covers the United States but does not apply in 17 other countries listed in

the note.

New Supercomputer Claims to Be Fastest

The builders of a new NASA supercomputer claim the 10,240-processor machine is the fastest in the world - an exciting prospect for researchers even if the speed title has yet to be officially bestowed.

Project Columbia, named for the space shuttle that was destroyed in early 2003, was built in less than 120 days at NASA's Ames Research Center. The cluster of 20 computers working as one will be used to speed up spacecraft design, environmental prediction and other research.

At the $50 million machine's public unveiling Tuesday, the science shared the stage with claims of record-setting performance from system-builder Silicon Graphics Inc., processor-provider Intel Corp. and NASA.

It's been a sore issue for the U.S. technology industry since June 2002, when a system built outside the United States topped a list of supercomputers compiled by an independent group that verifies performance claims. Japan's Earth Simulator has led the race ever since.

That could change next month, when the Top500 Project releases its twice-yearly rankings at a supercomputer conference in Pittsburgh.

Using just 16 of Project Columbia's 20 installed systems, the computer achieved a sustained performance of 42.7 trillion calculations per second, or teraflops.

"If you could do one calculation per second by hand, it would take you a million years to do what this machine does in a single second," said G. Scott Hubbard, Ames' director.

By comparison, Earth Simulator's sustained performance is 35.86 teraflops.

The competition for the top spot will be fierce. Last month, IBM announced the results of its Blue Gene supercomputer, which claimed its sustained performance was 36.01 teraflops. Because the machine is not yet finished, it could still come up on top.

An IBM spokesman did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

There may also be some improvement for Project Columbia. Its numbers were achieved using only four-fifths of its processors. Officials declined to comment on what the sustained performance might be when all 10,240 Itanium 2 processors are deployed.

But NASA officials, while touting Project Columbia's performance, said the system - even if it's not officially the fastest - will have a major impact on scientific and engineering research around the nation. Such work has already started, they added.

On Tuesday, an experiment was being run to determine if the extra computing horsepower could be harnessed quickly to respond to a simulated space shuttle problem.

Previously, it took as long as three months to run the calculations,

Hubbard said.

The new supercomputer also is being used to process global climate data from satellites to improve hurricane landfall forecasts. It also will help design space vehicles, model the behavior of interplanetary radiation and the help find life beyond Earth.

"We're going to have an impact that will be nationwide, if not worldwide, on weather, engineering design, on astronomy, on earth science, and we're going to see enormous, incredible results," Hubbard said.

Court May Clear the Way for Cheaper Ink

A federal appeals court this week struck a blow against Lexmark International's attempt to protect its share of the lucrative market for refill printer cartridges. The court vacated a preliminary injunction that barred Static Control Components (SCC) from selling computer chips enabling third-party manufacturers to clone Lexmark's cartridges.

District Judge Jeffrey Sutton of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, in Cincinnati, delivered the court's opinion that Lexmark had not established a likelihood of success on any of its claims against SCC and should not have been granted a preliminary injunction. His ruling details a series of legal errors in the district court's decision.

Lexmark, headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, sued Sanford, North Carolina-based SCC in late 2002 in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, alleging copyright infringement and Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) violations.

The district court favored Lexmark's arguments and granted the injunction in March 2003, but a later interpretive ruling by the U.S. Copyright Office cast doubt on the DMCA grounds Lexmark used to establish its case.

SCC retired the disputed Smartek chips in accordance with the preliminary injunction, but in March 2004 it began selling a new line of chips to enable cloned cartridges to function in Lexmark printers.

In the printer market, the big money comes not from selling the devices but from selling supplemental products like refill cartridges. Printer makers strongly encourage their customers to buy cartridges directly, but Lexmark took its campaign a step further by locking out products from third-party manufacturers.

The Lexmark/SCC case is closely watched for the precedent it will set, as the two vendors test whether copyright law protects software used to inhibit interoperability between one vendor's products and those from its rivals.

Sutton argues that it does not. "Lexmark's market for its toner cartridges... may well be diminished by the Smartek chips, but that is not the sort of market or value that copyright law protects," he writes in the ruling.

Lexmark did not promptly respond to a request for comment. SCC issued a written statement praising the decision. "The Sixth Circuit's ruling

solidifies and supports our position that the DMCA was not intended to create aftermarket electronic monopolies," says Chief Executive Officer Ed Swartz.

Sutton's decision focuses on technical aspects of the protection methods Lexmark used, but a second court judge, Gilbert Merritt, writes a concurring opinion advocating a firmer stance against Lexmark.

"We should make clear that in the future companies like Lexmark cannot use the DMCA in conjunction with copyright law to create monopolies of manufactured goods for themselves," Merritt writes.

A third court judge wrote a mixed opinion concurring on most points but dissenting on a few technical matters. The court as a whole noted that its opinion concerns only the preliminary injunction, and leaves a decision on a permanent injunction in the hands of the district court, to which the case will now return.

Merrill Lynch analyst Steven Milunovich says in a research note that he is "somewhat surprised" at the appeals court ruling but does not expect it to significantly affect Lexmark's business.

"[We] expect Lexmark to continue to press its legal case. We would also not be surprised to see the company adjust the digital handshake technology to make it harder for Static Control to circumvent in future cartridges," he writes.

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